



# MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 26

## Safety Bulletin

Hurricane Edition  
2 August 2004

### General Hurricane Information:

As the most seasoned residents of the coastal Carolinas will tell you, surviving a hurricane is a mix of preparation and luck. In recent years, this portion of the state has experienced its share of brushes with natural disasters, but has emerged relatively unscathed. The recent run of good luck may be at its end; scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are predicting an above-average Atlantic hurricane season. At the moment, the NOAA is expecting 12 to 15 tropical storms, with six to eight expected to become hurricanes, and of those, two to four may be major.

"NOAA's 2004 Atlantic hurricane season outlook indicates a 50 percent probability of an above-normal season, a 40 percent probability of a near-normal season and only a 10 percent chance of a below-normal season," said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, director of the NOAA National Weather Service. Similar seasons averaged two to three land falling hurricanes in the continental United States, and one to two hurricanes in the region around the Caribbean Sea.

Scientists are basing their predictions on the neutral weather and water conditions expected throughout July, and continuing during the peak hurricane season of August to October. Without a disruption like El Nino or La Nina, which would cause unfavorable conditions for hurricanes, the 2004 season may be one of the strongest North Carolina has seen in quite some time.

The ingredients needed for a hurricane include a pre-existing weather disturbance, warm tropical oceans, moisture, and relatively light winds aloft, according to the National Hurricane center. If the right conditions persist long enough, they can combine to produce the violent winds, incredible waves, torrential rains, and floods associated with these natural disasters.

Although predictions are based on thousands of hours of research, they are certainly not facts. Coastal residents should take solace in the work of local governments and emergency units, which have planned a number of ways to protect residents of Onslow County and the neighboring communities. But it is important that each resident take time now to prepare for a hurricane.

"Preparedness is planning in advance by every city, every business, every family and every individual, and then putting those plans into action if a hurricane threatens landfall near you," cautioned Max Mayfield, director of the NOAA National Hurricane Center in Miami, Fla.. "We are encouraging coastal communities and families to prepare now," Mayfield said.

Hurricane hazards have many faces, including storm surges, high winds, tornadoes, and flooding. To protect yourself and your family, it is imperative that you adopt a plan that keeps you safe from each of these perils. According to Mayfield, the first and most important thing anyone should do when facing a hurricane threat is to use common sense.

To protect yourself from hurricanes, follow four simple steps; develop a family plan, create a disaster supply kit, have a place to go, secure your home, and for those with pets, have a plan to take care of your four-legged friend. According to the National Hurricane Center, Your family's plan should be based on your vulnerability to the Hurricane Hazards. You should keep a written plan and share your plan with other friends or family. When gathering items for your disaster supply kit, pack items regardless of where you ride out a hurricane. The disaster supply kit is a useful tool when you evacuate as well as making you as safe as possible in your home.

Information for this article was obtained from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Web site, [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov), and [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).

## TROPICAL STORM ALEX MOVING SLOWLY TO THE NORTH-NORTHEAST

(See the [NOAA National Hurricane Center](#) for the **latest information** on this storm. Complete advisories are posted at 11 a.m., 5 p.m., 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. All times are Eastern. Advisories are posted more frequently as the storm nears the USA mainland.)



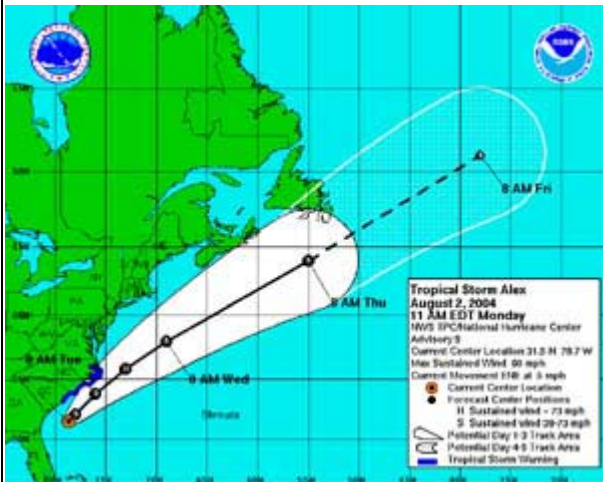
July 30, 2004 — At 2 p.m. EDT, the center of Tropical Storm Alex was located near latitude 31.8 north, longitude 78.6 west or about 115 miles southeast of Charleston, S.C. Over the past few hours, Alex has been moving to the north-northeast at about 6 mph. A general northeastward motion is expected later Monday. On the forecast track, the center of Alex will be slowly approaching the Carolina coastline over the next 24 hours, according to the [NOAA National Hurricane Center](#) in Miami, Fla. (Click

**NOAA satellite image for larger view of Tropical Storm Alex taken at 12:45 p.m. EDT on Aug. 2, 2004. [Click here](#) for high resolution version, which is a large file. Please credit "NOAA."**



Maximum sustained winds are near 60 mph with higher gusts. Some strengthening is forecast during the next 24 hours, and Alex has the potential to become a hurricane over the next day or so. (Click [NOAA satellite image for larger view of Tropical Storm Alex taken at 10:15 a.m. EDT on Aug. 2, 2004. \[Click here\]\(#\) for high resolution version, which is a large file. Please credit "NOAA."](#)

**Tropical storm force winds extend outward up to 105 miles from the center. The minimum central pressure reported by an Air Force Reserve Unit reconnaissance aircraft was 993 mb, 29.32 inches.**



Storm total rainfall accumulations of 1-2 inches, with isolated higher amounts, can be expected in association with Alex. High surf and rip currents will affect much of the southeastern and mid-Atlantic U.S. coastal areas for the next couple of days. (Click [NOAA image for larger view of Tropical Storm Alex tracking map. Please credit "NOAA."](#))

A tropical storm warning remains in effect from South Santee River, S.C., to Oregon Inlet, N.C.

For storm information specific to your area, please monitor products issued by [NOAA National Weather Service local forecast offices](#) and statements from local emergency management officials.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources. NOAA is part of the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#).

## HURRICANE RATING SYSTEM

### Category One Hurricane:

Winds 74-95 mph (64-82 kt or 119-153 km/hr). Storm surge generally 4-5 ft above normal. No real damage to building structures. Damage primarily to unanchored mobile homes, shrubbery, and trees. Some damage to poorly constructed signs. Also, some coastal road flooding and minor pier damage. Hurricanes [Allison](#) of 1995 and [Danny](#) of 1997 were Category One hurricanes at peak intensity.

### Category Two Hurricane:

Winds 96-110 mph (83-95 kt or 154-177 km/hr). Storm surge generally 6-8 feet above normal. Some roofing material, door, and window damage of buildings. Considerable damage to shrubbery and trees with some trees blown down. Considerable damage to mobile homes, poorly constructed signs, and piers. Coastal and low-lying escape routes flood 2-4 hours before arrival of the hurricane center. Small craft in unprotected anchorages break moorings. [Hurricane Bonnie](#) of 1998 was a Category Two hurricane when it hit the North Carolina coast, while [Hurricane Georges](#) of 1998 was a Category Two Hurricane when it hit the Florida Keys and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### Category Three Hurricane:

Winds 111-130 mph (96-113 kt or 178-209 km/hr). Storm surge generally 9-12 ft above normal. Some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings with a minor amount of curtainwall failures. Damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down. Mobile homes and poorly constructed signs are destroyed. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Flooding near the coast destroys smaller structures with larger structures damaged by battering from floating debris. Terrain continuously lower than 5 ft above mean sea level may be flooded inland 8 miles (13 km) or more. Evacuation of low-lying residences with several blocks of the shoreline may be required. Hurricanes [Roxanne](#) of 1995 and [Fran](#) of 1996 were Category Three hurricanes at landfall on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and in North Carolina, respectively.

### Category Four Hurricane:

Winds 131-155 mph (114-135 kt or 210-249 km/hr). Storm surge generally 13-18 ft above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failures on small residences. Shrubs, trees, and all signs are blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Extensive damage to doors and windows. Low-lying escape routes may be cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of structures near the shore. Terrain lower than 10 ft above sea level may be flooded requiring massive evacuation of residential areas as far inland as 6 miles (10 km). [Hurricane Luis](#) of 1995 was a Category Four hurricane while moving over the Leeward Islands. Hurricanes [Felix](#) and [Opal](#) of 1995 also reached Category Four status at peak intensity.

### Category Five Hurricane:

Winds greater than 155 mph (135 kt or 249 km/hr). Storm surge generally greater than 18 ft above normal. Complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures with small utility buildings blown over or away. All shrubs, trees, and signs blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Severe and extensive window and door damage. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of all structures located less than 15 ft above sea level and within 500 yards of the shoreline. Massive evacuation of residential areas on low ground within 5-10 miles (8-16 km) of the shoreline may be required. [Hurricane Mitch](#) of 1998 was a Category Five hurricane at peak intensity over the western Caribbean. [Hurricane Gilbert](#) of 1988 was a Category Five hurricane at peak intensity and is one of the strongest Atlantic tropical cyclones of record.



# **Carolina Hurricane #1**

An Editorial By: SSgt Edw. S. Heyward

Well here we go boys and girls the first one of the year, tropical hurricane, windy rainy thing Alex is here, or getting here, or getting closer, or whatever. So to stay in step with the rest of beautiful North Carolina I am going to the store to buy all the canned food and bottled water I can get my grubby little hands on. First however, I felt a responsibility to both my fans to write something about this whole thing, in case the 3-inch tidal wave in the PX parking lot sweeps me away to like the Commissary or something. Ron White said "it's not THAT the wind is a blowin' it's WHAT the wind is a blowin'" Now that gives us something to think about, especially since this Alex thing is liable to be a lot like the French Military (small, not threatening, and far away from where it needs to be to cause any concern), we can consider this a dry run, we'll call it our "practice hurricane."

Now there are a number of things you can do during a hurricane, which we will cover in a minute, but right now lets look at what we can do before the hurricanes arrival to make things a bit easier on all involved. First things first, those of you with an entire flea market worth of stuff in your yard that don't want to pick any of it up, just leave it there, the hurricane will remove it for you, and replace it with new junk. You should be thinking however, that kiddy pool you bought for "junior" 5 years ago, will now turn into the world largest Frisbee, and although light, may hurt someone if it hits them. Quick point, if you are out in a hurricane and get hit in the head with a flying kiddy pool, your new call sign is "that guy" and you had it coming. This is Gods way of cuffing you in the back of the head, just so we are clear, this makes you an idiot. O.K. back on track, Mother Nature being a force to be reckoned with, (see Lightning vs. That Guy) you need to look around and reinforce some things. For example, windows do much better with boards over them, and things like screen doors do much better if boarded over, and secured to the house. Another side note, you can board up your trailer, and still get an interview on Jerry Springer talking about what it was like when the hurricane blew through your neighborhood, so don't think that doing any of this is somehow sacrificing your shot at fame and fortune. Last but not least, make sure you have food and water for a few days. Water is more important than food, but they are both important to have. The key here is not to wait until the hurricane is in Wilmington to decide to make a quick run to the Food Lion. Plan in advance, and when you do make your shopping run, include things like: Canned goods, bottled water, shelf stable items. DO NOT include things like: bread, doughnuts, crackers, or anything else that can't get wet, all you will end up with is a big bag of dough. Beer and liquor are not advised, but hey if something either picked up or floated my house a mile down the road, I would need a drink, so unless you are "that guy" use your own judgment.

Now we need to cover activities during a hurricane, because this is when "that guy" seems to come out, for anyone who has been to Okinawa, you have already been briefed on what not to do. For those of you who have not, pay attention, because you do not want to be "that guy" when the forces of the almighty are out for a stroll, you might just convince him you need to be removed from this planet. Here we go, you might be "that guy" if during a hurricane you try to: (a) turn yourself into a human kite, (b) decide to go for a walk, (c) decide to go for a swim, or (d) decide not to prepare. Now most of us, think who would do any of that? "That Guy" would, plane and simple, the world is full of idiots, and in times like this you work with most of them.

So as the hurricane season dredges on, remember, when your buddies throw a "hurricane party" keep a couple things in mind, first, prepare your own house before you go, a little bit of preparation will keep the hurricane from checking out the inside of your house while you are gone. Secondly, keep your head about you. Alcohol will only make a bad thing worse if things go awry. And last but not least, when you see "that guy" walking for the door at the party wearing nothing but roller blades and his poncho liner, which he has tied to his wrists and ankles, let him know that one, it's been done before-not funny, two, a hurricane can and will blow you down the road faster than you think, and three naked road rash hurts in ways that would make Hitler cringe.

In a nut shell boys and girls, hurricanes are nothing to play around with. This one coming is probably nothing to worry about, but it is enough to get us all thinking about it. The basic theme is preparation, and common sense, keep this in mind, keep an eye on "that guy" and all will be fine. Stay safe, and as always have fun.

SSgt Heyward